

Michigan
Department
of Human
Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394

Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, May 23, 2008

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-6
Juvenile Justice	7-10
Food Assistance	11-12
Unemployment	13
State Budget	14-16

Roseville Girl Disappears From Park

ClickOnDetroit

POSTED: 5:09 am EDT May 23, 2008

UPDATED: 5:26 am EDT May 23, 2008

A 10-year-old Roseville girl went missing Thursday.

Police said Sierra Charise Myles was last seen riding her bike around 3:30 p.m. at Packard Park, in the area of Packard street and Curtis street.

She's described as a black girl with braided hair standing about 4 feet 5 inches tall and 55 pounds.

She was last seen wearing a black and white long sleeve shirt with blue jeans and a grey hooded jacket.

If you see Myles or have any information that can help police find her, you're asked to call 586-775-2100.



May 23, 2008

Woman pleads guilty in toddler death case

A former Port Huron woman charged with helping to hide the body of her 18-month-old toddler for more than two years pleaded guilty today to three felony charges.

Ashley Marie Snowden, 23, pleaded guilty as charged to being an accessory after the fact to a felony, involuntary manslaughter and second-degree child abuse. She faces up to 15 years in prison.

Snowden was arrested in Fort Wayne, Ind., in December along with her longtime boyfriend John William Gonzales after police found Braylon Bishop Gonzales' body stuffed in a storage container.

The couple was living in Fort Wayne at the time, but police believe they were living in Port Huron when Braylon died. Gonzales is charged with open murder in the death and is scheduled for an August jury trial.

Snowden's trial was scheduled to start Wednesday before St. Clair County Circuit Judge Peter Deegan.

Child sex abuse draws prison term

Daily Telegram

Thu May 22, 2008, 09:06 PM EDT

ADRIAN, Mich. -

The father of a sexually abused girl asked for serious punishment of the man convicted in the case. He then watched him get prison terms that could keep him behind bars as long as four years Thursday in Lenawee County Circuit Court.

Two prison terms were handed down to 30-year-old Joshua Roydale Winters of Adrian for fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct and a sex offender registration violation. He was accused of fondling an 11-year-old girl last year and of failing to register an address change in Adrian last July.

Winters cried as he struggled to read a statement asking for leniency from Judge Timothy P. Pickard.

"I want everyone to know I'm not the monster I've been portrayed to be," Winters said. He asked to be sentenced to the time he has served since his arrest in August and be released on probation to return to a family he said loves and misses him.

"Josh has shown no remorse for anything until now," the victim's father told the court before sentencing. Winters has smiled and laughed during previous court appearances, he said.

"He needs to learn a lesson," the father said. And the court should show abused children, he said, "that people who prey on them will not go unpunished."

His daughter should not know anything about the kinds of things she has gone through because of what Winters did to her, he said. The innocence taken from her cannot be recovered, he said.

“The court should take something from him that he cannot get back,” he said.

Winters’ record includes a 1999 conviction for attempted third-degree criminal sexual conduct, and his second conviction will require lifetime registration as a sex offender, Pickard said.

“The court has looked at your history as a juvenile and as an adult and it’s not terribly good,” Pickard said.

He handed down the longest prison terms allowed within state sentencing guidelines, giving Winters a 23-month to four-year term for the sex offender registration violation. He was given a concurrent 16-month to two-year term for the fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct conviction. He was allowed credit for 294 days already served.

As he was led from the courtroom, Winters told family members to expect him home in June next year.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Man gets up to 8 years for soliciting Saline teen

44-year-old had sent explicit e-mails

Friday, May 23, 2008

BY SALLY YORK

Ann Arbor News Bureau

A Grand Blanc man who sent sexually explicit e-mails to a Saline teenager and then tried to meet him will serve 34 months to eight years in prison.

Michael B. Huston, 44, was sentenced in Washtenaw Circuit Court Thursday after pleading guilty earlier to three counts of soliciting children for immoral purposes. He apologized briefly for his actions before being sentenced, said Assistant Prosecutor Sam Holtz.

Huston received a sentence of 34 months to eight years for each of the three counts, but they will run concurrently, Holtz said. "I'm very satisfied with the sentence," Holtz said. "The judge took all of the factors into account and determined that Mr. Huston is a dangerous person - and not only to this victim."

Huston had entered his plea at a preliminary hearing in March. He was arrested Feb. 8 in connection with sexually explicit text messages and e-mails police say he sent to a 15-year-old boy before trying to meet him outside Saline High School in Pittsfield Township.

Police said Huston and the teenager corresponded for months, but when it appeared that Huston planned to meet the boy, it scared the youth enough to compel him to tell officials at his

school. Officers arrested Huston after observing his car near the high school.

©2008 Ann Arbor News

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Boy sent to youth prison in home invasions

Friday, May 23, 2008

By Steven Hepker

shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A 15-year-old Jackson boy who was among six who raided three homes on Oct. 20 will go to youth prison, with the threat of adult prison if he backslides.

A defense lawyer, prosecutor, juvenile justice specialist and a judge debated the fate of Cornelius Lawson for an hour Thursday morning. Jackson County Circuit Judge Chad Schmucker sided with the prosecution.

"This was a real serious offense," he concluded.

He placed Lawson in the Jackson County Youth Center pending an opening in the Wolverine Secure Treatment Center in Saginaw. The only other option in the state system was the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Washtenaw County.

Schmucker will retain jurisdiction until Lawson is 21.

Defense attorney Michael Dungan argued for Lawson to stay in the community, with strict controls and treatment.

"He is one of the few young men I have run into who lives with an intact family," Dungan said. A stint in a Department of Corrections youth prison "is like sending him to gladiator school," Dungan said.

Mark Prelesnik, juvenile justice specialist for the Department of Human Services, weighed 12 factors and scored Lawson as a high risk to public safety, and not suitable for community treatment.

"This was a crime where an individual was traumatized by six people, with young children in the home," Prelesnik testified.

Dungan said Prelesnik's report was flawed because he did not talk to Youth Center officials, who considered Lawson a good kid capable of learning to make something of himself. Lawson also was well behaved since he was released from the youth home last fall, Dungan said.

Assistant Prosecutor Jessica Sutherland said Lawson had been building toward a criminal career, with two misdemeanor convictions in 2007 and "a huge escalation in what he was willing to do."

"They kicked in three different doors in three hours," Sutherland said.

Had Lawson broken from the pack after the first home invasion, Schmucker said, he might have considered a lighter sentence that would keep him close to home.

Blanche Roberts, 64, cowered with two young grandchildren behind one of the kicked-in doors at Canterbury House Apartments.

"The only thing that saved me was a cell phone," Roberts told Schmucker. "I cry all the time now."

The group, allegedly members of the Stick Up Kids gang, also raided two drug houses at gunpoint, stealing seven bags of marijuana from one, police alleged.

The boys claimed they had a single BB gun, but that was not confirmed, Sutherland said. Roberts, the wife of a retired corrections officer, said the gun pointed at her head was a real handgun.

Five teens pleaded guilty to felonies in one of the home invasions. Schmucker sentenced two older teens, Joshua Long and William D. Smith, to minimum four-year prison terms last week.

Lawson's 30-year-old uncle, Michael Smith, remains on the lam. Antuan Glaspie, 16, will be sentenced Tuesday, and Dominique Walters, 17, will be sentenced June 22.

©2008 Jackson Citizen Patriot

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Teen may get year in beating

Friday, May 23, 2008

By Danielle Quisenberry

dquisenberry@citpat.com -- 768-4929

A 16-year-old former Leslie High School student likely will spend up to a year in jail for beating a girl outside the school, his attorney said.

Jarod Marshall pleaded no contest Thursday in Ingham County Circuit Court to assault with intent to maim, a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

He is scheduled to be sentenced June 18.

Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield indicated she would give Marshall 10 to 12 months in jail and four years probation, assuming the facts of the case are as they have been presented to her, defense lawyer Joseph Brehler said.

Marshall is accused of nearly killing Mary Pulliam, 14, by the high school football field early Jan. 8 as the girl walked to school.

Pulliam of Leslie, who was found bleeding and unconscious by some classmates, spent about six weeks in Sparrow Hospital in Lansing recovering from broken bones and severe injuries to her head and face.

She continues to undergo therapy and has not fully regained her cognitive skills, said her father, Walter Pulliam.

Marshall initially was charged with assault with intent to murder, a felony punishable by up to life in prison, but prosecutors worked out a plea agreement with the defense.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III said investigators had some questions about Marshall's intent at the time of the crime, which led them to believe a jury might have questions.

Had a jury convicted Marshall of an offense less than assault with intent to murder, such as felonious assault, a judge could have decided to sentence Marshall as a juvenile, Dunnings said.

"We wanted to make sure he had a conviction as an adult," he said.

If subjected to juvenile penalties, he might have gone into a treatment facility and would not get the extended court supervision he is expected to get as part of this agreement, Dunnings said.

Under Michigan law, a person convicted of assault with intent to maim must be sentenced as an adult, Dunnings said.

Brehler said his goal is to keep Marshall, whom the lawyer called mentally challenged, out of prison.

The agreement was favorable to both sides, he said.

"It is about the best we could hope for," Walter Pulliam said. "At least he got a felony conviction on his record."

Pulliam said his daughter is attending school between therapy sessions, but only handles a couple subjects

at a time. She slowly is improving but has trouble remembering and understanding events and concepts, said her father, who has let his wife, Debra Pulliam, follow the legal proceedings.

Neither he nor his daughter was at Thursday's hearing.

She does not want to see Marshall, and it is too aggravating for him to get too involved, he said.

"It doesn't matter what they do to him. It is nothing compared to what he took from us," Pulliam said.

©2008 Jackson Citizen Patriot

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Hungrier than ever

Food pantries feel the crunch of a meager economy

By Chris Tredway
Antrim County News Staff Writer

May 21, 2008

MANCELONA - Shelves are still bowing at local food pantries but variety is beginning to taper as trips to the grocery become increasingly expensive. Two of Mancelona's finest have kept up with the growing numbers in need while holding their breath, looking to the community for food, funds and volunteers.

"Last year we averaged 170 families per month," said Randy Bechtol, who volunteers at the Mancelona Food Pantry (MFP). "This year we're already averaging 220 to 230 per month. It has increased dramatically."

Supplying all of Antrim County with boxes of food containing three square meals, including meat items, MFP is open for pick-up from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, though emergency boxes are available anytime, according to Bechtol.

"It doesn't matter if you're from California and you walk in here," he said. "If you walk in here needing food you're going to walk out with food."

Like many food pantries, MFP buys food by using funds generated through their retail store, selling clothes, toiletries, furniture and other donated products. Relying heavily on the Manna Food Project, a Harbor Springs based non-profit organization that sells food to pantries at low costs, MFP only shops for meat and bread at local grocery stores.

"We look for whatever sales we can find," Bechtol said. "But the stores do not give us a break. It surprises me, for what we do, that the stores don't help us out more. But God is blessing us, I'll tell you that. Every couple days

someone will come in with a sack full of food that will keep us above water. We're feeling (the economy) but still getting by."

Currently MFP breaks even each month, according to Bechtol, who said if it were not for Manna the pantry would be unable to meet the growing need. Acquiring 85 to 90 percent of their food from Manna, MFP receives two or three percent from donations and purchases the remaining amount from grocers to increase variety, Bechtol said.

The Manna Food Project gets their supply from a major warehouse in Grand Rapids where prices are set, mostly unaffected by raising costs of food and fuel, according to Kathy Hart, Manna's executive director.

"The crunch comes at pantries who spend money at grocery stores," she said. "We don't always get what pantries want. We give what's available."

The Community Lighthouse Food Pantry in Mancelona utilizes Manna's reduced pricing for only a third of their total stock. This affords a customized variety of food items but leaves the pantry more susceptible to higher pricing at stores that offer no discount.

"We serve 300 families per month and it's climbing," Lighthouse's co-director Pat Milligan said. "Right now we're making it but there are new people every day. We'll either have to cut down on the amount of food or put a cap on the number of people, and we don't want to do that."

Buying two-thirds of their supply from stores like Glen's Market, Lighthouse operates a retail store to raise money and has taken another step by opening the 131 Flea Market May 9 where vendors can rent booths for \$20 per weekend, according to Milligan.

"We need help from the community if we're going to make this work," she said.

Chris Tredway can be reached at ctredway@michigannewspapers.com or by calling 231-533-8523.

ClickOnDetroit.com

Jobless Rate Falls Across Michigan

POSTED: 5:02 am EDT May 23, 2008

UPDATED: 5:22 am EDT May 23, 2008

Seasonally unadjusted unemployment rates declined in all 17 of Michigan's regional labor markets in April.

Total employment was up in most areas, while labor force levels decreased in almost all regions.

State officials said the improved jobless rates were primarily the result of seasonal work force drop-offs.

Fewer people tend to be job-hunting in early spring.

The biggest rate improvements were recorded in the northern Lower Peninsula.

Regional unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted.

But national and state unemployment rates are adjusted to remove seasonal influences such as production cycles, holidays, model changeovers in the auto industry and climate conditions.

Michigan's seasonally adjusted jobless rate in April was 6.9 percent.

Copyright 2008 by [ClickOnDetroit.com](http://www.clickondetroit.com). The Associated Press contributed to this report. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

May 22, 2008

C.R.C. WARNS OF STRAINED BUDGETS THROUGH 2017

Even with an improving economy, spending pressures will grow faster than state revenues for nearly another decade, the Citizens Research Council says in a new report. That report suggests that last year's \$1.4 billion in higher taxes will only be of temporary help unless substantial policy changes are adopted in K-12 schools, transportation and several areas in the general fund.

The scope of the problem will total \$6 billion in the general fund between now and 2016-17, or an average of \$539 million a year in a \$10 billion budget, the CRC said in assessing the gap between revenues and providing current services. For school aid, it put the gap at \$3.6 billion, or \$308 million a year, and for highway funding, the gap would be \$417 million, or \$33 million a year.

The report, [Michigan's Fiscal Future](#), was prepared in collaboration with the W.E. Upjohn Institute, based on assumptions on Michigan's economy and population demographics between 2007 and 2017.

Health care costs are major components underlying the prediction that general fund spending pressures will increase by 6.8 percent per year and school aid pressures will grow by 4.7 percent over that period. Revenues for both fund areas are expected to increase at the same time by only 1.4 percent and 3 percent respectively.

The cost of the state's prison program is also projected to continue to outpace revenue growth, not so much because of the number of felons sent to prison, but because average sentence terms are about 60 percent longer than in neighboring states as well as the effect of rising health care costs on caring for an aging prisoner population.

"If Michigan is not likely to grow its way out of the structural deficits, state officials must consider policy changes aimed at the specific components of the state revenue and spending structure that contribute most to the deficit," the report said. It noted that the state has kept its budget balanced since 2000-01 in part by relying on one-time revenue sources, use of reserves and actions to minimize spending cuts.

The report outlined a number of policy options to consider on both sides of the ledger.

About 25 percent of the general fund spending gap could be resolved with introduction of a graduated income tax (requiring a constitutional amendment) and expanding the sales tax to cover all services but business-to-business transactions.

The services tax proposal would have an even larger impact on erasing the structural deficit in the \$18.4 billion School Aid Fund, resolving about half of the projected problem.

"Without recognizing growth of the service sector in today's economy, the state faces an increasing disconnect between the economy and revenues," the report said. An attempt to add a few categories of services to the tax base was made in 2007, but quickly was abandoned under a deluge of criticism. The rest would be in policy changes to reduce spending growth, including \$2.20 billion in health care by targeting areas such as increased cost-sharing with employees and retirees, eliminating optional benefits in the Medicaid program and removing some categories of recipients from Medicaid. It pegged the estimates on those and other reforms keeping health care costs at a growth of 5 percent a year instead of 9 percent, something that would also be a major contributor to reeling in School Aid costs.

Another \$1.49 billion could be saved in Corrections through sentencing reform, use of alternative corrections systems and reducing the time served in prison. That would cut prison population by 20,000 over 10 years, from the 51,000 now in prisons, instead of seeing the number of inmates swell by another 11,000 under current policies.

"Without reform, the cost of these items threatens to diminish the state's ability to provide other services, such as education, environmental, or recreation programs," the report said. Even so, it said virtually every area of the budget faces spending pressures that outpace the rate of revenue growth.

The acuteness of the problem is illustrated in what is facing higher education under the current structure: even if universities and colleges continue to get the same share of general fund revenues in the next 10 years as now - a steadiness that did not happen in the last 10 years - the spending pressures would produce a \$700 million gap in the system by 2017.

The report also said the pressures on the general fund will likely lead lawmakers to look to revenue sharing funds as a revenue source, even though the growth in sales tax revenue will be inadequate to fund statutory revenue sharing at the levels originally established in 1998.

In the transportation area, the report notes the fundamental problem of faster-growing spending pressures, at 5.6 percent annually, than revenue growth of 3.5 percent pegged largely to a static per-gallon fuel tax and a better-performing vehicle tax. Even raising the tax, something some road, construction and business groups favor, would be of limited help and not address the basic imbalance. Two separate task forces appointed by the governor are studying other alternative funding methods.

The report did not address the scope of any potential revenue increases, but addressed spending pressures based on a linear projection of expenditures. It also noted \$8.7 billion in unmet highway needs through 2030 under the state highway plan, along with repair and replacement needs from earlier periods that would dramatically increase the funding disparity.